
March 8, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

***Re: Letter of Support with Amendments – House Bill 343 – Environment - Cox Creek
Citizens Oversight Committee - Membership***

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation and the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 343 with amendments to align with Senate Bill 20, as it would have a significant beneficial impact on the continued success of the Port of Baltimore's Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) and allow for the continued collaboration with citizens and stakeholders at the Cox Creek Dredged Material Containment Facility (Cox Creek DMCF) in Anne Arundel County.

House Bill 343 seeks to amend the composition and responsibilities of the Cox Creek Citizens Oversight Committee (Cox Creek COC) to replace obsolete member entities and modernize the responsibilities of the committee to allow for more coordination and collaboration with key stakeholders active in northern Anne Arundel County. The amendments reflect minor changes to expand and update the membership and responsibilities following discussions with district representatives.

The MPA is responsible for finding adequate long-term placement capacity for all of the nearly five million cubic yards of sediment the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dredges annually from the federal shipping channels that link the Port of Baltimore to the Atlantic Ocean. Working with a diverse array of partners, including national, state, and local governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, community groups, citizens, and businesses, the DMMP provides a critical framework to manage material in innovative and sustainable ways that both include and benefit our local communities and the environment. Through the DMMP, the MPA has restored eroded wetlands, created wildlife habitat for countless species of plants and animals, and developed award-winning educational and outreach opportunities for local schools and communities.

The foundation of this model engagement program begins with seven oversight and advisory committees, including the Cox Creek COC, which is responsible for providing input to the MPA regarding the operation of the Cox Creek DMCF and recommendations on minimizing the potential impacts it may have on the nearby communities and natural resources in the area.

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With the support of the Cox Creek COC, the MPA has used their recommendation to initiate construction of a walking trail around the 100+ acre conservation easement and Swan Creek wetland area. The design of the Swan Creek Nature Trail, a Cox Creek COC-recommended community enhancement, is expected to be completed in 2025.

In late 2022, the MPA acquired the property adjacent to the Cox Creek DMCF to further long-term capacity recovery efforts through large-scale innovative reuse of dredged material. The property acquisition is a critical step in advancing the Innovative Reuse Program. As such, the need for an active Cox Creek COC is critical to continue to provide input and recommendations to the MPA.

The MPA works hard to closely align its statutory mission to increase waterborne commerce through the ports in Maryland with stewardship of Maryland's natural resources and the health and well-being of the environment and our neighboring communities. In doing so, the MPA recognizes the importance of a comprehensive approach to stakeholder collaboration to lead to equitably beneficial outcomes for all Marylanders.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation and the Maryland Port Administration respectfully requests the committee grant House Bill 343 with amendments a favorable report.

Respectfully Submitted,

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